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Department for NEA/ELA and PRM/ANE

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

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SUBJECT: UNHCR Jordan Budget and Program planning for
2009

¶1. (SBU) Summary: UNHCR Jordan Deputy Representative Arafat Jamal told RefCoord September 3 that the UNHCR 09 budget would be approximately 44 million USD. Some of those funds, he noted, would go directly to Jordanian line ministries that provide services to Iraqi refugees. Food distribution would give way to cash distribution for urban refugees. UNHCR planned to allocate resources to learning more about the caseload, including the effect of returns, resettlement, and internal relocation. Public outreach to the beneficiaries continues to be a challenge for UNHCR. End summary.

Serving Iraqis with a Leaner Budget in 09

¶2. (SBU) In 2009, UNHCR-Jordan will propose to Geneva a budget of approximately USD 44 million. In 2007-08 UNHCR assisted 3000 Iraqi refugee families and hopes to reach 7000 Iraqi refugee families in FY09 with appropriate assistance programs. Jamal said that UNHCR contributions to the budgets of the education and health ministries would reach a total of USD 9 million. Eight million of that would come from the Government of Iraq's contribution to UNHCR's Iraqi appeal. In order to monitor the use of the funds, UNHCR asked both ministries to document how Iraqi refugees have impacted GOJ expenditures in 2008, but neither ministry responded with precise figures.

¶3. (SBU) The Ministry of health provided what Jamal called a shopping list of material needs, without connecting those needs to services provided to Iraqi refugees. The Ministry of Education submitted a school construction plan to meet the general needs of the education systems, to include refugees. Meanwhile the GOJ resisted drawing linkages between programming and Iraqi refugees.

Cash instead of Food for Urban Refugees

¶4. (SBU) According to Jamal, in FY2009 UNHCR plans to introduce a cash distribution scheme in Jordan, to replace the food distribution system. UNHCR would use an ATM card/cash system to allow vulnerable, registered refugees to withdraw a fixed amount of cash on a monthly basis. The program, coordinated with the GOJ, would provide the same benefits as a similar GOJ program for vulnerable Jordanians.

¶5. (SBU) Jamal was confident that the criteria used for selecting vulnerable refugees are precise enough to ensure the cash disbursements went to the truly needy.

UNHCR planned to assist 3050 registered families with the new program. In late 2008, UNHCR planned to sign the final agreement with their banking partner, the Amman Cairo Bank, which would administer the program. The formula for monthly cash distributions would be as follows: Men would receive JD 50; women would be entitled to JD 60; and each dependent would be entitled to JD 10.

Uncovering the Facts on Iraqi Refugees

¶ 6. (SBU) Jamal said that uncertainty about numbers and demographics is a barrier to efficient assistance to the Iraqi population. To address this, UNHCR contracted the University of Jordan's Center for Strategic Studies (JCSS) to compile and analyze all available data on refugee demographics and to produce reports that partners might use in program planning. The JCSS research should be available in November 2008.

¶ 7. (SBU) UNHCR also plans to increase its outreach programs, within the limits set by the GOJ, which has not permitted UNHCR to use mass media to disseminate information to refugees. Instead, the refugee organization has distributed printed material from 16 UNHCR-supported community centers around the Kingdom. Registered refugees with cell phone service also receive UNHCR digital text messages with updates and urgent protection information.

¶ 8. (SBU) Jamal said that local press had recently interviewed UNHCR-Jordan Country Representative Imran Riza. Jamal said that press interviews served as an opportunity to disseminate information about UNHCR programs and to dispel security concerns and misconceptions about UNHCR activities among the local 2009

population.

Comment: Cash Distribution is a good Alternative to Food

¶ 9. (SBU) Although the UNHCR cash distribution approach is unconventional, it has two advantages over previous methods: 1) As registration is a prerequisite for participation, it may encourage unregistered refugees to come forward; 2) Distribution sites would be located throughout the region, allowing wide access. UNHCR partners would not have to go out looking for beneficiaries. After the program has been in effect for one quarter, UNHCR and its donors will look at results. At that time, UNHCR would reassess the program.

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